

**In the Claims**

1. (Currently Amended) A method to remotely enable software-enabled options comprising the steps of:

receiving a user I.D. at a centralized facility from a user;

receiving an option-enabling request from the user at the centralized facility specifying an option requested to be enabled in equipment at a subscribing station;

at the centralized facility, confirming that the option has not already been enabled;

generating an enabling feature at the centralized facility upon confirmation that the option has not already been enabled, the enabling feature comprising a software key ~~designed to enable software already installed in the equipment;~~

sending the enabling feature from the centralized facility to the equipment in the subscribing station; and

activating the option in the equipment;

wherein the option-enabling request received at the centralized facility is transmitted from a workstation via a remote link, with the workstation being a separate device from each of the subscribing station and the centralized facility and being at a location remote from each of the subscribing station and the centralized facility.

2-3. (Canceled)

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the equipment includes medical imaging scanners.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of designing a software key to enable the option for a predetermined trial period.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of authenticating the user I.D. after receiving the user I.D. at the centralized facility.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of sending an enabling feature includes downloading the enabling feature to the equipment and remotely enabling the feature automatically and without further user input.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of sending an enabling feature to the equipment includes sending the enabling feature, by one of an FTP and an email, to a field engineer for manual installation and enablement of the feature.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:  
verifying the option activation; and  
sending a verification email to the user confirming option enablement.

10. (Currently Amended) An option-enabling system comprising:

a subscribing station including:

a central server;

having at least one a plurality of in-field products networked to the central server; and

at least one a computer separate from the central server and the plurality of in-field products that is programmed to control a transfer of data to and from the plurality of in-field products so as to function as a centralized management system there for;

an on-line center capable of receiving and authenticating a user I.D., validating an option request for at least one of the plurality of in-field products, and creating an option key in response thereto; and

a communications network to relay data from the on-line center to the subscribing station, the communications network including a communications portion in the on-line center and a communications portion in the subscribing station, and further includes an ability to connect the on-line center to the subscribing station through an external communications network and transmit the option key from the on-line center to the subscribing station in response to a user I.D., receipt and authorization of a user I.D., and receipt of a valid option request receipt;

wherein the computer at the subscribing station transmits each of the user I.D. and the option request for a specified in-field product to the on-line center by way of the central server and the communications network.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10 further comprising a computer within the on-line center programmed to:

receive a user I.D. at the on-line center from a user and validate the user I.D.;  
receive an option request from the user;  
if the user I.D. is validated, receive a system I.D. and validate the system I.D.;  
if the system I.D. is validated, check whether the option requested was previously enabled; and  
if the option requested was not previously enabled, enable the option requested.

12. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 11 wherein the computer within the on-line center is further programmed to generate an option key specific to the system I.D.

13. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 12 wherein the computer within the on-line center is further programmed to:

download and install the option key in medical equipment at the subscribing station; and  
verify option enablement in the medical equipment.

14. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 13 wherein the computer within the on-line center is further programmed to send an electronic verification of the option enablement.

15. (Original) The system of claim 10 wherein the subscribing station includes at least one medical imaging device.

16. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 12 wherein the computer within the on-line center is further programmed to transmit the option key to a user identified by the user I.D. via one of an FTP or an email so as to allow the user to manually enable the option.

17. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 12 wherein the computer within the on-line center is further programmed to generate the option key with a disablement feature to disable the option after a predetermined time period.

18. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having a computer program stored thereon which, when executed by a computer, causes the computer to:

receive an option-enabling request from a user to request an option to be enabled in a medical device located remotely from an on-line center;

receive a system I.D. and validate the system I.D. with data from a database at the on-line center;

compare the option-enabling request with any other option requests for that system I.D. in the database at the on-line center and reject the option-enabling request if the comparison results in a predefined number of matches;

otherwise, generate an option key and forward the option key to one of the user and the medical device to enable the option, the option key including therein software to be installed on the medical device.

19. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 18 wherein the generation of the option key includes creating a disabling feature to disable the option after a predetermined number of days.

20. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 18 wherein the computer program further causes the computer to receive and authenticate a user I.D. before receiving an option-enabling request.

21. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 18 wherein the predefined number of matches is one.

22. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 18 incorporated into an on-line center that is connected to a plurality of subscribing stations, each subscribing station having at least one medical imaging scanner that has operational software that comprises modules, where at least one of the modules is optional and not operational and the option key is generated to automatically enable the at least one optional module.

23. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling an option in a device comprising:  
receiving a user I.D. at a centralized facility;

receiving an option-enabling request specifying an option requested to be enabled in the device at a subscribing station;

confirming that the option has not already been enabled; and if not,

generating an enabling feature at the centralized facility upon confirmation that the option has not already been enabled, the enabling feature comprising ~~a software key designed to enable software already to be~~ installed in the device;

sending the enabling feature from the centralized facility to the device in the subscribing station; and

installing the software so as to activating enable the option in the device.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the device includes medical imaging scanners and further includes designing a software key to enable the option in the medical image scanner for a predetermined trial period.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising:

authenticating the user I.D. after receiving the user I.D. at the centralized facility;

and

wherein sending the enabling feature includes downloading the enabling feature to the equipment and remotely enabling the feature automatically and without further user input.

27. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the software key comprises software to be installed on the equipment in the subscribing station.

28. (New) The system of claim 10 wherein the option key includes therein software to be installed on a specified in-field product.